THE QUESTION OF DRESS

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Viewed exclusively in relation to the natural need which first prompted man to use it, with the cultural super additions to it left out of account, the thing called dress would appear to have just two functions.

1. To provide a covering—since man has an innate sense of shame and modesty—for certain parts of the body; and
2. To protect the body against the impact of the weather.

A dress which meets these twin needs should, in its simple form, be the dress of all places since the bodies of all human beings, as also the obvious and convenient methods of covering them, are alike. At most, for climatic reasons, there could be this difference that the warm regions have dresses which are lighter and cover a lesser part of other body, and the cold regions' dresses which are heavier and cover a greater part of the body.

Available information about the earliest human being also shows that in the times when dress catered only to the original, natural needs of man, it had no great diversity of shapes. The little diversity it did have was due largely to climatic difference. But as human consciousness developed and man marched towards civilization, as new resources were discovered and industries set up, and as that human faculty called taste became cultivated, certain super additions were made to the original dress. And since the new influences had varied in quality and magnitude from nation to nation, the super additions which different nations made to the original dress came to be different as well.

EIGHT DETERMINANTS

It is impossible to enumerate all the major and minor factors which cause the birth, change, and evolution of variously-shaped dress among various peoples. In a span of

several thousand years, the collective life of nation and the personal lives of the members of each nation come under countless influences, internal and external, which are nowhere recorded. Some of them are too subtle to be perceived even. But if we skip details and concentrate on the principal factors which accustom different nations to different styles of dress, we shall find that they divide into eight categories.

1. Geographical conditions, which compel the inhabitants of a country to adopt a particular kind of dress and living.

2. Moral and religious nations, whose divergence make nations use dissimilar dresses.

3. Taste, the natural faculty of taste is, in the case of each nation, worked upon by peculiar influences. It, therefore, develops in each nation differently. As a result the likes and dislikes of nations differ.

4. The mode of life, which, too, develops distinctively in the case of each nation, conforming as it does to the distinctive geographical, economic, intellectual, and moral conditions of that nation. Consequently, each nation uses a dress which is best suited to her mode of life.

5. The economic situation. This includes a nation’s general means of living, her vocations and industries, her strong or weak financial position, etc. The dress of each nation is closely related to the state of her economy and change with a change in the latter.

6. Culture and refinement. Each nation exists on a certain level of culture and refinement and her dress necessarily keeps to that level.

7. National traditions, by means of which one generation inherits from another a particular style of living and dress, and, altering that style here and there, bequeaths it to the coming generation. This continuity in the phenomena of life is actually a guarantee of continued national existence. Naturally, it is held dear by every nation.

8. Extraneous influences, which are exercised upon the thoughts and living patterns of every nation as she come into contact with other nations. But the nature and extent of these influences are determined largely by the political, intellectual, and moral climate of the nation in question.

These are the main factors which have a rigorous control not only over the dress of a nations but over her whole social life. The dress of each nation is the product of their combined operation.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

Two basic facts emerge from the foregoing analysis.

One, that dress is not merely an external device for covering and protecting the body, it is also rooted deep in the psychology, culture, civilization, traditions, and social setting of a nation. It is as a matter of fact, a manifestation of the spirit which informs the body of a nation. It is through her dress that a nation articulates her nationality and introduces herself as a collectivity before the world.

Two, that the above mentioned factors, with the exception of the first (geographical conditions) are, in respect of every nation, undergoing a constant, though imperceptible, change. Slowly but surely, their change and evolution affect not only the dress but the whole gamut of the national life. A little elaboration will make this point clear.

When a nation advances in the field of knowledge and the arts, achieves enlightenment of thought, develops her industry, commerce, and craftsmanship, attains economic prosperity, make closer contacts with other nations and learns from their morality, culture, and mode of living various kinds of lessons, then a natural process of evolution is touched off in her social life: her sentiments change, her taste and manners improve, and her way of life acquires grace and elegance. She devises new methods to meet the newly-arisen needs and express her respect for the national traditions in more benefiting forms. With gradual development taking place in all spheres of life, her dress, in stuff and style, becomes more tasteful, attractive, and decorous. At no stage of this evolutionary process is the need felt to summon a conference or Parliament and push through it a resolution which would prescribe a particular shape or style of dress for the whole nation. Automatically, under the impact of the jointly operating social factors, the old forms of dress are modified, new forms come into vogue, and the national taste and temperament, in keeping with their true inclination, go on refining the dress.

CHANGE, NATURAL AND UNNATURAL

This, then, is the only natural way in which a national dress is born, changed, and evolved. There is an artificial or unnatural way also, namely, compelling a nation to abandon her dress and take some other nation’s dress as her own. As for change, it would occur in both cases. But there is a world of difference between the two types of

change of a tree. As a tree grows, its colour, size, fruit, leaves, flowers, and branches change constantly. In spite of all these changes, however, the “selfhood” of the tree remains unimpaired. If it is a banana tree, it will remain such till the end. If it is a mango tree, it will continue to be one throughout the various stages of its growth. It will take in much soil, water, air, heat, and sunshine, but will thoroughly assimilate whatever it takes in.

The other kind of change is exemplified by a tree which began as a banana tree but on which were suddenly stuck the bark, twigs, and leaves of a mango tree. No one can tell what this queer specimen actually is—mango or banana! Stunts like this do not produce any genuine and profound change. They in fact impede natural evolution. But people who possess no insight into social problems and have a superficial way of looking at things, childishly think that if the external features of a nation’s dress and living are altered, the nation herself will change in some real sense.

THE CASE FOR A CHANGE OF DRESS

The arguments generally advanced in favour of a change of dress are as follows.

A change of this kind transforms the mentality of a backward nation. It replaces her inaction by action. No sooner is the dress of the decadent age cast off than all the inner weaknesses and the interests associated with that age do the vanishing trick. And no sooner does a nation slip into the new dress---especially if it has been taken from a developed nation—than her psychology and way of life undergo a radical change: she gets a spontaneous feeling of being developed and is accepted by the advanced nations as a peer and equal. Once she adopts the mode of life of the advanced nations, she becomes civilized, practical and enterprising like them. It follows that, in order to become civilized and efficient, it is both necessary and useful to adopt the dress and living of the civilized and efficient nations.

THE FLAW IN THE REASONING

Such are the arguments—and there are no doubt many other arguments like these—which are adduced in favour of changing the national dress. But they are all flimsy; no deep thinking or insight underlies them. It is sought to reinforce them by citing in their support some renowned personalities, with the expectation that their names, the moment they are pronounced, will strike an instant awe into the listeners. *(It should be kept in mind that this article was written in 1929, at a time when the rulers of certain Muslim countries were putting their nations on the path of “development” by forcibly changing their dresses. In India also, certain sections of people were urging the use of this recipe for progress.).* But the fact remains that quoted authorities hardly possess

any greater wisdom and insight than do the quoting followers. Both are intellectually shallow and academically inferior. A military general whose successful strategy in an emergency prevents the destruction of a nation must be esteemed and admired. But the honour accorded to him should strictly commensurate with his accomplishment. Moreover, he should be honoured only in the capacity in which he has made that accomplishment. But to elevate him to an unmeritedly high plane and to describe him as a thinker, reformer, and architect of civilization is to commit a folly of the same magnitude as when an able engineer who has secured a town against floods by raising embankments is eulogized as a genius and saviour in every sense and is named for the directorship of education and health also.

THE CASE AGAINST A CHANGE OF DRESS

So far the problem has been dealt with in principle. The discussion, it is hoped, has sufficiently exposed the error of the pro-changers. But it seems that the misunderstanding bred by the trend of the times are a little hard to banish. I therefore feel that the case against changing the national dress should be stated with greater explicitness.

1. The shape and style of a dress are not in themselves something lasting or permanent. They are rather the result of the combined working of a large number of natural and social factors. If this fact is granted, it will also have to be admitted that the style of dress natural to a nation is the one produced by the working of those factors, and that it would be extremely unnatural to replace it by a style which has not been produced in that way.
2. There is a close affinity between a nation’s dress and her mode of life. The latter, again, has many sorts of correlations with the cultural life of that nation. These correspondences are able to survive the changes in the dress and mode of life when the changes have occurred naturally. But if the dress and mode of life are changed artificially and compulsorily, or only the dress is thus changed, chaos strikes the entire social life, because the other departments of life fail to keep step with the change, and, consequently, suffer in the harmony of interrelationships.
3. For a dress to be decent, handsome, and congruous with a developed state of existence, it is essential that the nation should as a whole make progress and grow to be a cultured, tasteful, enlightened, and practical-minded nation. Her advancement in that direction will be accompanied by an improvement in her dress. As she covers the stages of development, she will, naturally and unconstrainedly, better some of its old things, and, borrowing certain other things from outside, will adapt them to serve her turn. To disregard this natural method of improvement and, instead, abruptly change the dress is like attempting to leap out of one state into another. No real transformation can be brought about in social life by such funny jumps.
4. To upgrade a nation’s living and dress before she has developed socially and to

raise her to an undeservedly high position is just like making a minor reach puberty by placing him in an explosive situation and giving him special foods and drugs. The havoc that this extraordinarily attained puberty will play with the young innocent's mental and physical mechanism is only too obvious and gives an idea of the disturbance and anarchy which will afflict the mind, morality, and social set-up of a nation on her being compulsorily "civilized".

5. To weigh down a nation with a dress and a living which are too much for her economy is tantamount to ruining her. For she will then try to adopt not only the dress and living of the richer nations but their norms and mores also, and that will have a disastrous effect upon her.
6. Dress, language, and script are the basic elements of a nation's individuality. Without them her individuality suffers corrosion and a time comes when she is totally absorbed into other nations. It is this fact which explains why certain nations, now called extinct nations, disappeared from the face of the earth. Their extinction does not mean that their members all perished. It means that those nations failed to retain their individuality. They either themselves knocked down the props of their individuality or allowed them to collapse. Their members went on adopting the dress, language, script, and social manners of other nations and so ended up by 'losing their identity. A like fate awaits the nations who are taking the stupid measures of their unwise leaders as a guarantee of progress.
7. A nation who adopts the dress and living of another nation in fact betrays deep inferiority feeling. She owns that she is low and contemptible. She acknowledges that she possesses nothing of which she could be proud. That her forebears were incapable of leaving behind anything which she could preserve without bringing shame on herself. That her taste is too vulgar, her mind too obtuse, and her creative faculties too mean to devise a proper mode of life for her. That, in order to pass herself off as a civilized nation, she is prepared to borrow indiscriminately from other nations, whom she regards as her model. That her own existence during the thousands of years has been no better than the existence of beasts since she has failed to produce anything commendable or worthy of survival. It is obvious that no nation with a modicum of self-respect would make a spectacle of her self like that. History, current as well as past, bears witness that a nation puts up with such ignominy only in one of the following two cases: when, in every field, she has suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of other nations and finally knuckled under (E.g. India, Turkey, Egypt, Iran); and when she possesses no glorious traditions; no culture worth the name, and no high-grade creative powers and is a parvenu among the nations of the world (Japan, for instance).
8. The only thing which a nation may, in fact must, borrow from another is the results of the latter's researches, the fruits of her creative activities, and those practical methods of hers which have led her to success. Any lessons that can be learnt from her history, morality, and administration must be learnt. The causes of her rise and success must be canvassed and all things of use picked up since these are the common heritage of mankind. To slight and spurn them on nationalistic grounds is mere prejudice. But to disregard them and borrow from a nation her foods, wearing apparel, and living style and to consider these

> a means of progress is crass stupidity. What sensible person would for a moment think Europe owes her advancement to jackets and petticoats, skirts and waistbands, hats and bonnets? Or that she has developed because she makes a liberal use of powder and rouge and lipstick? If it is not things like these which have made Europe developed, then why do the advocates of reform and progress make their first rush for them? Why does it not sink into their heads that the splendour of European life is due to efforts put in unremittingly through centuries? Why do they fail to understand that any nation who works industriously, resolutely, and perseveringly would achieve a quality of life as enviable as the quality of European life?

These arguments make it amply clear that the nation who adopts the dress and living of another nation behaves unreasonably and unnaturally. In normal circumstances nobody would even play with the idea of abandoning the general lifestyle prevalent around him and adopt in its place the lifestyle of an alien people. Such thinking is the product of abnormal circumstances only and is comparable to the act of eating earth by some women in their period of pregnancy, or to the condition of the man who has a defective eye structure and to whom, therefore, everything looks askew.

THE VIEW OF THE SHARIAH

So far we have been treating the subject from the social standpoint only. Now we shall approach it from the angle of the Shariah and see what Islam has to say about it.

The religion of Islam is in complete harmony with nature. In every matter it takes up a position which is supported by common sense and vindicated by sound thinking. Take an unjaundiced view of things and you are sure to reach the conclusions which Islam has already arrived at Islam does not force man to wear a particular kind of dress and choose a particular mode of life. However, purely from the ethico-social viewpoint, it enuciates a few principles and wants every nation to amend her dress and living in accordance with them.

The first principle relates to satr or essential concealment. Islam thinks it morally necessary that all male persons, to whatever nation or country they may be belonging, should conceal the bodily parts between the navel and the knees; and that all female persons, no matter what region of the earth they are inhabiting, should cover the whole of their bodies except the face, hands, and feet. *(It should be noted that, in regard to women, this injunction relates to satr and not to hijab. Satr implies what a woman must conceal from all which includes her father and son) except her husband. Hijab means more than that. It draws a distinction between the closely related and the unrelated males. Islam does not permit women to go about displaying their charms and graces outside the limits of their domestic life.*

And "face" means just face and not half of the breast; "hands" means hands up to the wrists and not arms bared up to the shoulders; "feet" means up to the ankles and not uncovered legs). If a nation's dress is not meeting these conditions, Islam would

require it to be altered in the light of this principle. Once the conditions are fulfilled, Islam will deem its object achieved and will not concern itself with what type of dress that nation wears.

Secondly, Islam asks men to keep from wearing silk dress and golden and silver jewellery, and both men and women to avoid using dresses which are luxurious and showy and suggest conceit and vanity. The magnificent trailing costumes *(Worn, for example, by kings, popes, priests, judges of the high courts, and other high-ranking officials on ceremonial occasions, and by brides on the eve of marriage. A costume of this kind is so long that quite a few men have to walk behind holding it up. The Prophet said:" On the Day of judgement, God would not look at the person who conceitedly trails his dress on the ground.")* which give a swelled head to their wearers are, in the eyes in Islam, condemnable. The prestigious and ostentatious dresses which some men wear only to create a lordly impression on the common people or to flaunt their riches are also forbidden. Nor does Islam like those flashy garments which engender attitudes of luxury worn in your country or society and it becomes an Islamic dress.

In the third place, Islam wants the human dress to be free from all those symbols of idolatory and polytheism which have been adopted by any religious sect. These would include the Cross, the Hindu cross thread, pictures, and other un-Islamic emblems. Besides introducing these ethical and cultural reforms, Islam thinks it necessary that the Muslim's dress should have some distinguishing mark so that they do not get mixed up with non-Muslims, are able to recognize fellow Muslims easily, and succeed in cementing the bonds of their social life. No specific mark or symbol has been recommended for this purpose by Islam. The matter has been left to be determined by the people themselves. When the Islamic Movement got under way in Arabia, the Prophet and the other Muslims used to wear the customary national dress of Arabia. But the Prophet wanted the Muslims to be distinguished in appearance from non-Muslims, so he instructed them to wear turbans along with caps *(Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Mustadrik contain the following tradition; "That which sets us off from polytheists is caps with turbans". This tradition has led some to suppose that wearing caps with turbans is a sunnah and so constitutes a permanent law to be universally observed by Muslims. But this is a misunderstanding. The sunnah simply is that the Muslims, when they are living amidst a nation consisting chiefly of non-Muslims, should in some way distinguish their dress.)* The common Arabs wore either turbans or caps, one to the exclusion of the other. Wearing turbans and caps at the same time thus became typical of Muslims and adequately served the purpose of telling the followers of the New Movement from the common people of Arabia. Later on, when the whole of Arabia embraced Islam, it no longer remained necessary to retain this mark of distinction because now the Arabian dress itself had become Islamic and none of its wearers was a disbeliever or polytheist any more.

Likewise, when Islam started gaining ground in Iran and other countries, it was at first considered essential that the converts to Islam should either wear the Arabian dress or add to their old national dress some distinguishing mark, (e.g. a turban or a cloak of special type.). For their dress at that time was the dress of non-Muslims and had they continued to wear it without any distinguishing symbol, a separate collective existence of theirs could not have been made possible. But when most of the people of those countries entered into the fold of Islam and their national dresses were modified in accordance with the specification noted earlier, those dresses all became Islamic dresses. In modern times also, the national dresses of the countries all or most of whose people have adopted Islam are, with all their variety, Islamic dresses. Where the Muslim and non-Muslim communities are mixed, any dress which identifies its wearer as a Muslim is an Islamic dress. And where the whole population consists of non-Muslims, every convert to Islam should add to his dress some recognized Islamic sign so as to distinguish himself from non-Muslims.

Imitation

At this point we are faced with the question of tashabbuh or limitation. Imitation means assuming the likeness of someone. It is of four kinds, and below we shall discuss each kind in the light of Islam.

1. Imitation of one sex by the other. Men's imitation of women and women's imitation of men represent a deviation from the course of nature and are symptomatic of a diseased mentality. Islam, therefore, a condemns it. The Prophet has cursed the men who wear feminine dress and the women who wear masculine dress. Every sane person would do exactly the same. Femininity in men and masculinity in women are, in any form, detestable and revolting.
2. Imitation by one nation of another. Sometimes a nation as a whole adopts the style of appearance of another nation. This, again, is an irrational attitude and is developed in a nation invariably at the time when she touches the nadir of indignity. It is severely censured by Islam. The way in which, during the period of the companions, such imitation was curbed and the conquered nations checked from taking to Arabianism in the Islamic spirit truly expressed.
3. Individual's imitation of another nation. When some members of a nation imitate the ways of another nation, they give evidence that they have a weak and unstable nature, that their character is like a liquid which assumes the shape of its container. Such behaviour is morally reprehensible and may be compared to a shameless fellow's claiming kindred with an unrelated person. The claimer of false kinship and the imitator both deserve reproach, the one

because he thinks it a shame to be the son of his real father, and the other because he believes that it is unworthy to belong to the nation he was born into and that honour could be achieved only by being related to an alien nation.

Culturally also such conduct is wrong because the people who take a foreign nation as their ideal become rootless and, in the end, belong neither to the nation they were born into nor to the one they wish to belong to. That explains why the Companions, especially the Caliphs Umar and Ali, upbraided those Muslims who, while living in foreign countries, had abandoned the beduoine dress and, bedazzelled by the glamorous cultures of Rome and Iran, had started using Roman and Iranian dresses.

4. Muslims imitation of the disbelievers. Such imitation is injurious to the collective existence of Muslims. It alienates Muslims from one another and obstructs the cooperation which Islam desires to exist among them. Besides, it is an indication that a person who is a Muslim has a quite strong leanings towards non-Muslims. Politically, the danger is that the man who presents the appearance of a non-Muslim would be taken for and treated as a disbeliever by the Muslims. For these reasons the Prophet has advised Muslims to shun this kind of imitation. He said: “Oppose the Zoroastrians”. These words, found in so many traditions, clearly show that the Prophet wanted the Muslims should be able to recognize their brethren and treat them as such. The Prophet also remarked that he would not responsible for the Muslim who lives among non-Muslims. He meant that if, in a war, such a Muslim is taken for an enemy and killed by the Muslims, he himself would be to blame for his death. And when then Prophet said that he who imitates any people is one of them, he again meant that the imitator is to be regarded as a member of the nation he imitates and treated like the members of that nation.

-Tarjumanul Qur’an

Zil Qa’adah 1258/January 1940 C.E.

EUROPEAN DRESS

(*This is a part of an article written in 1939 in criticism of the address which a well-known religious scholar, on his return to India after a long exile, delivered while presiding over the Calcutta session of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Bengal. In this address he advised the Muslims to adopt Indian nationalism on the one hand and European dress on the other.)*

Queer fish these Eastern nationalist! Vigorously preaching nationalism on the one side, they feel, on the other, no qualms about adopting the dress and culture of an alienation or country. And that is not all. They make so earnest attempts to popularize the foreign culture and dress among their people as if it formed an article of their nationalistic creed. And, where they can have their way, they do not hesitate to impose these things upon the people. In India, Iran, Egypt, Turkey—every where they follow the same line of action.

But "nationalism"—if that word connotes national self-respect also—naturally demands that a man stick to the dress and culture of his own nation, feel great and superior about them, and learn to take pride in them. Where this sentiment is totally lacking, goodness knows where nationalism comes into the picture from. Nationalism and lack of national self-respect exclude each other completely. But our Eastern nationalists excel in yoking opposites together. As a matter of fact, a man needs to have a judicious mind and a sound vision to guard him self against contradictions in thought and practice. And if a man possesses these qualities, why on earth must be leave the straight and smooth path of nature and embrace, of all things, nationalism?

The direct, clear, reasonable, and natural approach which it is possible to adopt in any matter--- that is what is called Islam. And Islam, just as it holds no brief for the exaggerated and inflated version of nationality, i.e. nationalism, lends no support to anything which breaks the legitimate, natural bonds of nationality, sponges out the individuality or distinguishing marks of nations, and cultivates base morals in the members of a nation.

The Quran tells us that although all men have a common origin, God has set up two types of distinctions between them: the one between the male and the female, and the other between families, tribes and nationalities.

O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nation and tribes that ye may know one another.. (XLIX: 13)

And that He createth the two spouses, the male and the female. (LIII: 45)

These two kinds of distinctions are at the bottom of social existence and man civilization, and the Divine Scheme calls for their maintenance. The distinction between man and woman has been made so that a psychological attraction may exist between them. It follows that their distinguishing characteristics must be fully preserved. The distinction between nations has been made so that human beings are divided into such social groups as would facilitate cooperation among them. Again, it is essential that each social division or cultural group should have some distinguishing marks by means of which its members may recognize, understand, and become intimate with one anther and differentiate t6hemselves from the members of the other groups. Obviously, the only marks of this kind could be language, dress, living

patterns, culture and civilization. The need to preserve them is thus urged upon by nature itself.

That is why imitation has been interdicted by Islam. There is a tradition in which the Prophet has cursed the woman who wears masculine dress and the man who puts on feminine dress. (Mustadrik, vol.iv, p.194.) In another tradition he cursed the men who imitate women and the women imitate men. (Bukhari, “Kitabul-libas) The reason for this tough-line approach is that such imitation suppresses and diminishes the psychological attraction which God has caused to exist between the two sexes, whereas Islam wants that attraction to be retained. Likewise, the abolishing or mixing up of the cultures, practices, and dresses of nations is against the interests of collective existence. Consequently, Islam is opposed to this also. When national distinction is unnaturally blown up into nationalism, Islam makes jihad against it. For it is nationalism which gives birth to stupid chauvinism, savage prejudices, and ruthless imperialism. But Islam is at enmity only with nationalism and not with nationality. Denying nationalism, it wants to keep nationality intact and is as much opposed to abolishing it as it is opposed to inflating it out of proportion. In order to understand Islam’s balanced and moderate attitude in this regard, the following transmissions should be read carefully.

1. A Companion of the Holy Prophet asked: “What is partisanship? Is loving one’s tribe (or nation) partisanship?” The Prophet said: “No partisanship is to support one’s tribe (or nation) in oppression”(Ibn Majah)

2. The Prophet said: “He who assumes the likeness of any people is one of them.”(Abu Dawud)

3. The Caliph Umar wrote to Utbah bin Farqad, Governor of Azerbaijan: “Take heed of wearing the dress of polytheists” (i.e. the people of Azerbaijan). (Muslim, “Kitabul-libas waz-zeenah”.)

4. The Caliph Umar had issued orders to all his governors not to allow the non-Muslims citizens to use the dress or present the appearance of Arabs. So much so that, on making peace with the people of certain regions, a regular clause forbidding those people to wear the dress of Arabs was inserted in the treaty. (Abu Yusuf, Kitabul Kharaj.)

5. The Arabs who were posted in Iraq, Iran etc., in connexion with military or civil service, were continually reminded by the Caliphs Umar and Ali to take care of their speech and refrain from speaking foreign tongues. (Baihiqi)

These precedents make it plain that the internationalism espoused by Islam does not aim to intermix nations by wiping out their distinguishing characteristics. Islam wants nations to preserve their identity and traits and to establish among themselves such bonds of morality, culture, beliefs, and ideas as would eliminate international tensions,

frictions, prejudices, and oppression and promote brotherhood and cooperation.

There is another reason why Islam holds imitation is contempt. A nation forswears her national characteristics only when she has deteriorated mentally and degenerated morally. The man who readily accepts the influence of others and takes on their colour while he gives up his own must be morbidly fickle, docile, and impressionable. Unchecked, that malady will get worse; and if it turns into an epidemic, the entire nation will catch a psychological illness; she will suffer from moral enervation and her mind will grow too weak to take the strain of a sound and solid ethical system. Islam hates to see any nation nursing this psychological disease. It therefore tries to protect against it not only Muslims but, where possible, non-Muslims also because it does not like moral infirmity to be found in any human being.

It is among the vanquished and subjugated peoples that this disease spreads most widely. Not only are they morally weak, they lower themselves in their own eyes. They regard themselves contemptuously and hope to win esteem by imitating their rulers, whom they take as models of virtue, excellence, nobility, refinement, and anything else they can think of Slavery so eats away their humanity that they become willing to parade their disgrace, and so far from feeling ashamed of this act, take positive pride in it (Should anybody doubt our statement, he may note the difference between the Englishmen and Indians in India itself. A handful of Englishmen scattered and dispersed, have been living amidst tens of millions of Indians for two hundred and fifty years. But your will not find a single Englishman who has taken to the Indian dress. On the contrary, it is still difficult to number the Indians who dutifully mimic the Englishmen and who take pains to copy not only the latter’s dress but their speech and behaviour also. What explanation, after all, will be offered for this?

It should be remembered that the present article was written in 1939, when India was one country and a long-time colony of the British. However, what has been said in this footnote remains. True even after the passage of more than a quarter century. John Bull is gone but the condition of his bondsmen has not changed.) Islam, which aims to redeem man from degradation and invest him with nobility and honour, would do its best to prevent his falling into the deep most pit of indignity. That precisely is why the Caliph Umar sternly forbade the non-Arab nations, after they had come under the rule of the Islamic Government, to imitate the Arabs. Had they been allowed to develop slavish traits and habits, Islamic jihad would have lost its sense and purpose. When the Prophet charged the Muslims with the banner of Islam he did not want them to become overlords of those nations and train them in servility.

For these reasons, Islam is against the idea of a nation becoming a replica of another nation and trying to copy the latter’s dress and mode of living. As for the cultural borrowing and lending that naturally takes place between nations in contact with one another, Islam not only approves of it but encourages it. It is not Islam’s wish to wall nations off from one another by creating prejudices among them and thus preclude

any kind of cultural or other exchanges between them. The Holy Prophet wore the Syrian gown which was an article of the Jewish dress. A tradition reads: “He (the Prophet) performed the ablution while having a Syrian gown on.” He also put on the narrow-sleeved Roman cloak which was worn by Roman Catholics. The Naushirwani mantle, described in a tradition as the Persian royal mantle, was also in his use. Umar donned the burnous, which is a kind of high cap and forms a part of the Christian monks’ dress. Use of odd things like these is a matter quite different from imitation. Imitation is when a man’s total appearance resembles that of another nation and it becomes difficult to tell his nation by taking a look at him. On the contrary, what we have termed borrowing and lending implies only that one nation may borrow from another something good and suitable and assimilate it into her style of appearance, the style of appearance, even after that assimilation, on the whole remaining the same.

(Tarjumanul Quran, 1358 H/1939 C.E.)